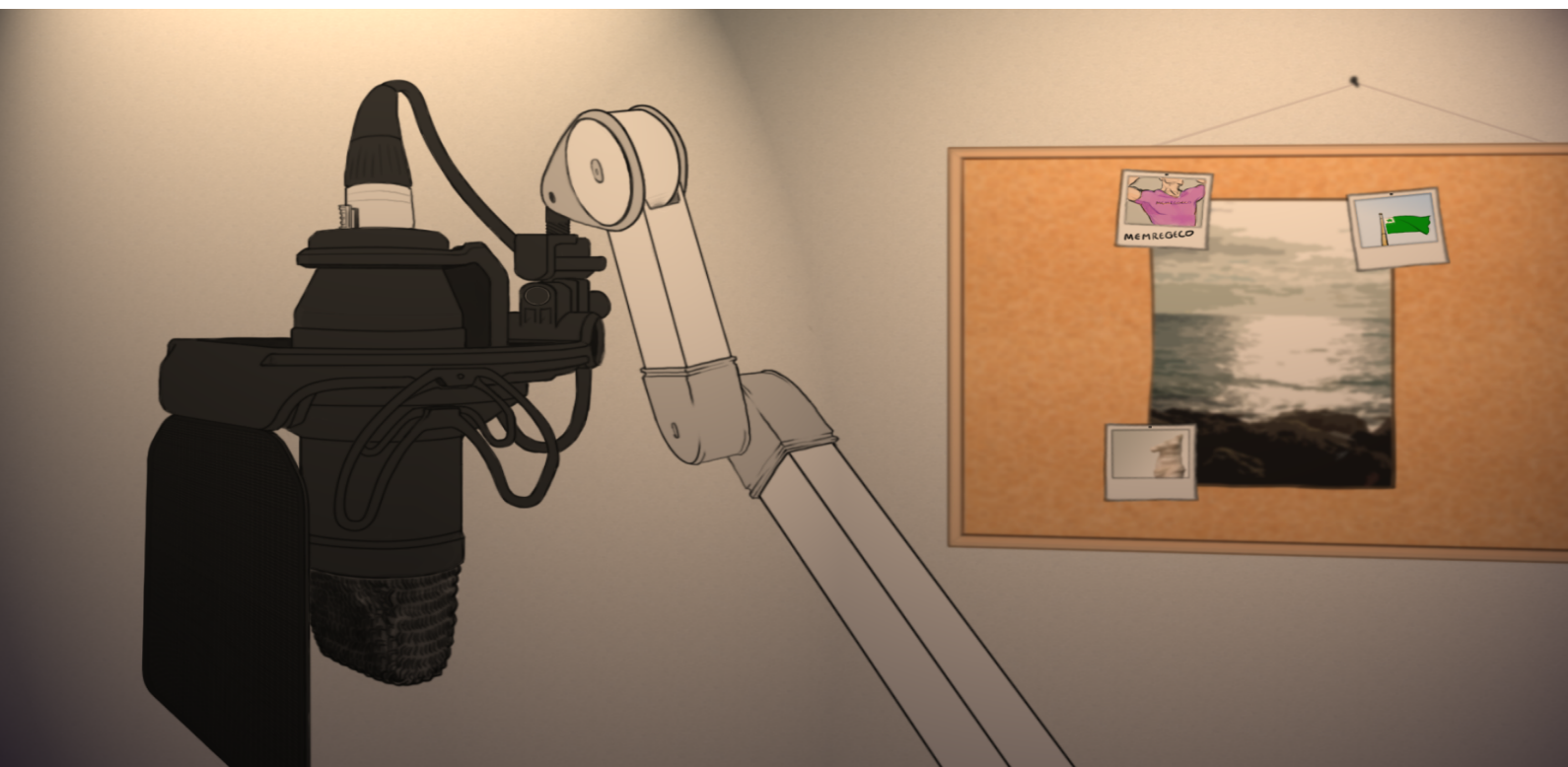


MEM



By Edward Shambrook

ACT I

ACT I

SCENE 1

The lights rise. Beat. Taylor walks on holding a manuscript of her book. She approaches the microphone. The producer stands to the side.

PRODUCER: Taylor; do you think you can just read out the title page?

TAYLOR: Sure.

This recording is brought to you by
AudioMoments.com

Wolfenden
By Taylor Voakes

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PRODUCER: That's great. And if you'll just bear with me while I check the levels.

General button pushing.

You told me you've never actually recorded anything before. That right?

TAYLOR: Correct.

PRODUCER: OK. So; as I said before, don't worry about reading the chapter titles for now because I prefer to record those later. And just relax. And whenever you're ready, just go ahead...

ACT I**SCENE 2****TAYLOR:**

You'll surely understand why I was convinced my publisher would jump at the chance to commission a book about Matthias Wolfenden. If building your own floating nation before isolating yourself on it doesn't make you worthy of a biography, what does?

As it turns out, this book was actually an incredibly difficult sell. In hindsight, I guess it's not-too-difficult to see why. For starters, I had only met Matthias twice before and I was very unlikely to be granted access now. My publisher was rightfully fearful that my book would amount to little more than mere speculation.

She equally questioned whether I was qualified above anyone else to write this book. Matthias had at one time granted interviews to just about any journalist who asked and had held regular press conferences on the island. I had attended one of those conferences and I had talked to him once after that, yet this pales in comparison to those who met him often.

Convincing my agent to commission this biography would require making contact with Matthias. I knew that this in itself would require extreme measures, not least since the island didn't even have a postal address. Nevertheless, I got to work.

The recording studio surrounding Taylor disappears. She becomes a part of the action. The producer exits. Up until the interval, we only hear the producer's voice. Taylor wears headphones. She places these headphones on her ears whenever she is recording. When interviewing other characters, she wears them around her neck.

TAYLOR:

On one occasion, I tried sailing out to sea, waiting for a favourable tide, sticking a message in a bunch of bottles and almost praying that one of them would wash to shore. I didn't receive a response.

On another occasion, I tried flying a drone to the island. Matthias, who always kept guns with him as a warning to potential intruders, wasted no time at all in shooting it down.

On the exact same day, I politely asked his security aides- who were tasked with hovering around the island in helicopters, parachuting supplies to him and so forth- to attach a polite little note to the next package that was to be parachuted down to the shore.

One aide reluctantly agreed to do so; on seeing it, Matthias set to writing a note in the sand. Clearly addressed to the aide who'd passed on the note, it simply said:

“U R FIRED”.

My persistence eventually paid off, albeit in a different way to that which I'd anticipated. Now on the verge of giving up entirely on the book, I received an incredible email completely out-of-the-blue. Seemingly sent from a domain that Matthias appears to have specifically created so as to send this one message, the message was succinct.

MATTHIAS: FUCK OFF!

TAYLOR:

Matthias was so infamous at that point that his sending those two words became a news story in itself.

As it turns out, being *the* journalist who managed to make contact with Matthias Wolfenden made me a minor celebrity in my own right. Valery, my once-sceptical publisher, now actually seemed far more eager to press ahead with the project, taking the view that the publicity afforded to us by that two-word email would “really drive sales”.

More importantly, she took the view that my having attained a response at all boosted my credibility; she reasoned that one would have to have been incredibly persistent in order to be *that* journalist who got a response from so secluded a man.

Nevertheless, Valery was still concerned that the book might still be overly speculative. To my disappointment, having the unique opportunity to hover above *Pomona*- the now-deserted seastead where Matthias famously isolated himself- and gaze upon what Matthias had become seemed to do little to calm Valery’s concerns*.

Nevertheless, my enthusiasm still in-tact, I pressed on. I interviewed numerous individuals who had known Matthias prior to his self-imposed isolation. I was incredibly fortunate to have been able to interview Pomona, Matthias’s ex-wife and the namesake of the aforementioned island. She’d escaped isolation, but she’d maintained a public silence up to now. I asked her why she decided to break her silence.

POMONA: I’m just sick of living in the shadows, really.

TAYLOR:

I was also able to speak to Ruth, the daughter that Matthias and Pomona had adopted from China. Now nineteen years old and estranged from her parents, she’s one forthright individual.

RUTH: People say they give a shit about me, but I don't think they do, really! People come up to me and say things like, "I pray for you a lot" or "You're always in my thoughts". Like... great. Thanks!

TAYLOR:

However, the book then came very close to cancellation when Matthias almost starved himself to death last November in a likely suicide attempt.

Needless to say, this event genuinely shocked and saddened Valery and I. We were both fearful that writing a book that may or may not be critical about a vulnerable and suicidal man could be considered cruel and in bad taste.

Nevertheless, we have decided to press on regardless. There will doubtless be those who will consider it heartless to "pick on" a man who could be quite vulnerable. Yet I feel that Pomona and Ruth's stories are worth telling, and that the revelations contained within this book are in the public interest. I thus make no apologies for this book, and those who call for me to do so will be sorely disappointed.

ACT II

ACT II SCENE 1

*Taylor continues to roam the stage with headphones on.
As before, we only hear the producer's voice.*

PRODUCER: OK. That's great so far, Taylor. How are you feeling? Are you feeling / OK?

TAYLOR: / I'm feeling just great, thanks.

PRODUCER: OK. Well, in that case, do you want to just keep cracking on for now?

TAYLOR: Sure.

PRODUCER: OK. Great. As I say, you're doing an awesome job so far.

TAYLOR: I don't doubt it for a second. You said that like you doubted me.

Beat.

I'm kidding, by the way.

PRODUCER: Oh! Good, good. I had to stop then. I was like, "arrogant much?"

Beat.

OK. So... um... whenever you're ready, then.

ACT II

SCENE 2

TAYLOR:

Only a few years before his suicide attempt, Matthias and his wife had stood side-by-side in preparation for the official opening of *Pomona*.

Matthias enters.

MATTHIAS: Welcome everyone to the unveiling of tomorrow's greatest hope. But before I dive in, let me just preface this by asking the question I'm sure you're just too polite to ask out loud: what the hell is all this anyway? What's that loony up to now?

The answer is simple; we face the most unimaginable threat and I'm doing what I can to help. In the short term, this will be a luxury island that will make vacation dreams come true for those who can afford to stay here. And I can just hear 'The Guardian' having a *field* day with that admission!

Yet this is a project far greater than that, far bigger than any of us, in fact, myself included.

We have record-high CO2 levels. We recently surpassed over four hundred and three parts per million of CO2 in the atmosphere and it's still climbing. And what that CO2 increase results in is a steady increase in temperature and- more to the point- a rise in sea levels as the ocean expands and the ice caps melt. And let us be clear; that is just a fact and it does nobody any favors if you deny that!

What we need are practical, forward-thinking, long-term solutions, and I'd venture to say I've found a small one; this floating seastead as it were- and, if our three-step plan is implemented, six or seven little floating islands- that will one day serve as settlements to anyone displaced as a result of climate change. Islands that could even float from place to place and even pick up those in need.

We're a tiny company and we're working according to our means by starting small and charging high prices; the aim being, of course, to gain enough capital that, in the long run, we can really make a difference to people's lives.

So; I'll pass it over to Pomona- this island's namesake and the woman who has most made a difference to my life- to officially open the island. Now; there are no formal traditions for creating a new world. So; I've taken it upon myself to create a new tradition.

So; here's the plan- I will ask my dearest Pomona to name the island, cut the ribbon- you know, the usual stuff. But then I'll ask her to plant a tree seed. Because... you know... that's environmental and stuff. Anyway-

POMONA: I hereby name this island *Pomona*.

*Pomona cuts the ribbon and plants the tree seed.
Clapping.*

MATTHIAS: And we're not done yet. You see; I thought that this place could do with a little culture to kick-start proceedings. My wife will *kill* me for this because she *hates* surprises. But... to honor the official opening of *Pomona*, I had this little statue commissioned to commemorate the island's namesake.

And for this, I'd like to ask my daughter Ruth to please step forward and get ready to rip off the curtain. Not yet... wait for it! Wait for it! 3...2...1. Now! Whey!

TAYLOR:

A smile beamed across Pomona's face throughout that whole ceremony. Several newspapers commented on just how excited she looked. Even 'The Guardian'- the paper that Matthias had gently mocked in his speech- stated that Pomona's enthusiasm gave the whole project "a certain credibility that it might otherwise have lacked had it just been the lovechild of an eccentric billionaire". She even kept a brave face when Matthias dropped a bombshell during an interview.

MATTHIAS: I'm really proud of what we've done here and I'm determined to stay here until the island achieves its purpose.

TAYLOR:

She hid her anger well but, almost as soon as they got through the door...

MATTHIAS: So I think that went well, don't y-?

Matthias is interrupted by a slap to the face.

MATTHIAS: Hey. What's your *prob*-?

POMONA: You *promised*! You *promised* we'd leave after three months!

MATTHIAS: And I'm sure we will.

POMONA: How sure!?

MATTHIAS: Very sure.

Beat.

I'm very, very sure we'll be ready to leave in just a few months! Or at the very most six, so-

A large object is hurled across the room. It hits Matthias square on the head. Pomona storms off. We hear a door slamming at least five times. At the other side of the stage, Pomona hurls clothes into a suitcase. After a long pause, Matthias sheepishly wanders over to her.

Three months.

Beat.

Three months. I promise.

TAYLOR:

I asked Pomona...

TAYLOR:

Do you feel that you were tricked in some way?

POMONA:

Definitely. I don't think he ever had any intention of leaving. Where else would he have gone?

ACT II SCENE 3

TAYLOR:

That same night, they ended up filming a video they uploaded onto YouTube. In hindsight, it's hard not to be struck by just how happy they all look and by how openly they all tease Matthias for learning Esperanto. His bad pronunciation of this strange language developed by an eye doctor in the late 1800's at one time made him a source of gentle ridicule within the Wolfenden household. As Ruth put it to him in the video:

RUTH: You sound like such a dumbass!

MATTHIAS: You're the dumbass, dumbass!

RUTH: / Dumbass, dumbass, dumbass, dumbass! /

MATTHIAS: / Dumbass, dumbass, dumbass, dumbass, *dumbass!* /

POMONA: (*Filming*) Say it again!

MATTHIAS: What? Dumbass?

POMONA: No. The Esperanto thing you said. Say it again...

MATTHIAS: Nah, nah! Not while you're recording!

POMONA: Oh... come / on!

MATTHIAS: / No. Come on. No!

POMONA: Pleeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeease!

MATTHIAS: Oh, alright! If it'll shut *you* up!

Beat.

Wait a second. Wait a second.

Beat.

(Slowly) Mia Esperanto estas malbona. Mi konfesas ĝin. Sed mi lernis la esperantan tio mi havas lernis... ĝis... nun... tre rapide, do mi tre optimisma pri mia progreson. Ankaŭ, mi havas la tutan... tempon... en la mondo... lerni ĉi tiun lingvon dum mi loĝas sur ĉi tiu insulo, do mi tre konfidenta mi lernos Esperanto... eĉ... pli... multe... rapide ekde dum mi loĝas ĉi tie.

Settling down after much laughter.

POMONA: Say it again.

MATTHIAS: *(Faster now)* Mi diris: mia Esperanto estas malbona. Mi konfesas ĝin. Sed mi lernis la esperantan tio mi havas lernis ĝis nun tre rapide, do mi tre optimisma pri mia progreson. Ankaŭ, mi havas la tutan... tempon... en la mondo... lerni ĉi tiun lingvon dum mi loĝas sur ĉi tiu insulo, do mi tre konfidenta mi lernos Esperanto eĉ... pli multe rapide ekde dum mi loĝas ĉi tie.

More laughter.

RUTH: What does that mean anyway?

MATTHIAS: Ne diras "what does that mean?". Diras ĝis: kion tio signifas?

POMONA: Huh?

MATTHIAS: Kaj ankaŭ ne diras "huh". Diras ĝis: "keeeeyyy... ooooooh".

POMONA: Keeeeey...oooooh? But respond in English! Innnnnn...glish!

MATTHIAS: Fine. I said that I have all the time in the world to learn Esperanto whilst we're living here. That's the basic gist of it.

POMONA: Yeah... well; don't get too comfortable with that arrangement. We won't be here that long.

MATTHIAS: I know.

Still, though, it's pretty neat.

POMONA: Well... kinda.

MATTHIAS: What do you mean, "kinda"? Not "kinda". *Is!*

POMONA: It's not like it's a skill, is it?

MATTHIAS: Learning a second language isn't a skill?

RUTH: But no-one speaks it!

MATTHIAS: It's a skill, all the same, isn't it?

Plus... there's something neat about it.

RUTH: Like what?

MATTHIAS: Hey! Cheeky!

But... I don't know, really. I just feel it kinda... suits me, that's all.

POMONA: How so?

MATTHIAS: Not sure, really. It just... suits me.

POMONA: Each to their own, I guess.

Beat.

I never did understand you.

Same here....

Freak!

Who are you calling a freak?

Matthias chases Ruth off-stage, both of them giggling incessantly.

ACT II**SCENE 4**

TAYLOR:

The next day, Matthias Wolfenden was showing journalists around the island. He proudly showed off all the luxury amenities; the luxury café where one coffee costs what it takes many three hours to earn, the 24/7 spa, the restaurant where you could buy lobster as a starter and use specially-fitted crystal taps after using the toilet.

These amenities were reserved, of course, for those who could afford to use them. The staff who worked there and who largely lived on the outskirts of the island, often used to privately ridicule the rich snobs who used to stay there.

As he showed them around the island, the journalists seemed to get somewhat bored by the tour since they quickly asked him questions that were not strictly related to it. For example, one journalist asked him how long he'd be staying...

MATTHIAS: Three months.

TAYLOR:

For the most part, these questions did not bother Matthias too much. That is until another journalist asked him whether he thought the whole thing was “a bit much”.

MATTHIAS: Sorry... what was your name?

No response.

Who the hell do you think you are? How dare you? *So what* if some people want to relax a little and live in a bit of luxury? Big deal!

Again, no response.

(Under his breath) Douchebag.

Beat.

Next question.

TAYLOR:

After what felt like an eternity, another journalist was brave enough to ask him what he wanted the island to be.

MATTHIAS: The future.

TAYLOR:

Pomona told me...

POMONA: I had *no* idea what he meant by that.

TAYLOR:

Matthias was certainly determined that the island would not remain a haven for the rich for too long. According to Pomona, he told her matter-of-factly:

MATTHIAS: What do I want to build a holiday home for a bunch o' rich fucks for? There's more to life than that.

POMONA: I thought you just said that-

MATTHIAS: I know what I said but-

POMONA: Then / what-

MATTHIAS: / It's just- do you think they might have a point?

POMONA: Well... possibly. But I thought you said that we were only going to target richer customers for / a short time...

MATTHIAS: / I know, I know. It's just... I wanted to build a new world, a new frontier, a fresh start / for humanity.

POMONA: And you will but you'll just have to be / patient-

MATTHIAS: / I know, I know. It's just- I feel like I've just built a tax haven. I don't feel I've actually achieved anything at the minute.

POMONA: You never know... we might get a few poor visitors who've saved their pennies.

MATTHIAS: Come on? You really think that's likely?

POMONA: There's the staff...

MATTHIAS: Who serve the rich fucks.

POMONA: Like you...?

A pause, then a smile.

MATTHIAS: Cheeky!

TAYLOR:

Matthias had a point. As Pomona told me...

POMONA: Who'd visit our island over visiting, let's say... the Eiffel Tower? What we found was that the only tourists we could attract were the sort of people who could afford to visit our island *and* the Eiffel Tower! And the only people who wanted to live here were people who could afford to go back home whenever they wanted.

TAYLOR:

Matthias had always wanted to open his doors to the less fortunate gradually. Yet the inordinate wealth of the island's newest residents had Matthias worried. He reasoned that any project that exclusively catered to the wealthy, however temporarily, would rapidly lose credibility as the practical rescue operation for the poor that Matthias had intended for the nation to be.

Matthias therefore did what he always did when he needed a fix; he retreated into his own little world for the next few days, and did nothing but think. He had done this since he was a child; his parents had actually thought he was deaf before learning that he was just prone to daydreaming. They eventually learned to just let him be, a lesson subsequently handed down to Pomona. An argument between Ruth and Pomona did nothing to break his concentration...

RUTH: This place is a *shithole*!

POMONA: Hey! Hey! *Hey*!

RUTH: There's *nothing* here /

POMONA: You're not / the only person who's had-

RUTH: / and the people here are assholes! Nothing / but rich fucks with nothing-

POMONA: How *dare* you use language like-?

RUTH: Oh, stop it. I heard Dad saying the exact same-.

MATTHIAS: (*From nowhere and to no-one*) Esperanta nacio. Tio estas!

The argument between Pomona and Ruth comes to an immediate halt.

RUTH: / What?

POMONA: / Huh?

MATTHIAS: (*Almost whispering*) A nation. We need a nation.

Matthias exits.

TAYLOR:

That same night, the “tweet that challenged the seas”
was sent out...

MATTHIAS: By the way, I consider Pomona a nation. Watch out UN!

ACT II SCENE 5

TAYLOR:

Three days later, Matthias followed up by creating a short YouTube video. His dry, obviously scripted announcement was nevertheless enough to create enormous excitement.

MATTHIAS: Hello all. Thank-you for watching. I'm here to follow up on that tweet that I wrote a few days ago. As you may have seen, I tweeted that I consider *Pomona* to be a nation. I believe *Pomona* to be deserving of this title because I believe it to be its own legal entity with its own laws, customs, culture and values. As eccentric Esperantists like me would say, ĉiuj hailigas nian novan nacion. All hail the Esperanto nation!

TAYLOR:

Yet there was a problem. The United Nations had always been tricky when it came to recognising artificial structures as nations in and of themselves. They quickly made their position on the matter clear, saying that they would not recognise *Pomona* as a nation-state. Matthias quickly responded. In another YouTube video, he said:

MATTHIAS: The position of the UN is both out of date and rooted in laws which no longer make sense. A failure to change its position will be to its own detriment.

TAYLOR:

And in another YouTube video:

MATTHIAS: This is no longer a question of protocol. It's a question of what is just and what is not.

TAYLOR:

Yet it wasn't just the United Nations that objected. Since *Pomona* would be a "floating nation" which, unlike any other internationally-recognised nation state, would be capable of moving at will, several national leaders voiced concerns that territorial issues could arise should this new nation float into territorial waters. Matthias attempted to calm fears by uploading another scripted YouTube video:

MATTHIAS: We have no intention of making any territorial claims to the sea itself or to any area of land beyond the artificial structure currently regarded as belonging to Matthias Wolfenden.

TAYLOR:

Yet this video seemed to do little to assure world leaders, all of whom continued to voice opposition to Matthias's intentions. Matthias didn't hold back in making his feelings known:

MATTHIAS: I am bitterly disappointed at the response of the international community to our wish to be rightfully designated a nation state.

TAYLOR:

Most disappointing of all, the British were in agreement with this arising consensus. This development infuriated Matthias. In an unscripted video, he said:

MATTHIAS: I am incandescent... *incandescent* that the United Kingdom- the nation I once proudly called my own- is denying us our rights to make our own laws.

Let's face it; it's not the first time in history that Britain's denied a nation the right to make its own laws, but I'd kinda hoped we'd moved on a bit since then.

ACT II**SCENE 6**

TAYLOR:

Matthias and Pomona pressed ahead with another ceremony to announce the birth of *Pomona* as a nation, in spite of the protests from a growing number of global leaders, many of whom denounced the occasion as provocative and in bad taste.

To add fuel to the fire, ‘The New York Times’ printed a story regarding Matthias’s assistant and a particularly dedicated contractor involved with the ceremony. According to the story, the contractor had opined that it might be unnecessary to launch a thousand doves to celebrate the birth of the new nation. Hours later, a dedicated assistant who worked offshore was ordered to fire the contractor. When she refused, she was also fired.

In the event, the doves were the talking point of the night, but for all the wrong reasons. At first, all seemed to go to plan. Matthias called Ruth and Pomona over to ask if they would assist in launching the doves. Pomona said her expected line:

POMONA: I hereby welcome one-and-all to the beautiful new nation that is ‘Pomona’.

TAYLOR:

Ruth, as rehearsed, launched the doves.

Doves are either implicitly or explicitly launched.

Unfortunately, Matthias, meticulous as he was, had also gone to great lengths to ensure that all the windows were squeaky-clean for the big occasion.

The results were incredible; one dove after another smashed into the windows. All in all, about fifty of the thousand doves that were launched as part of that ceremony were killed.

Pomona seemed to find the whole thing amusing.

POMONA: You should have seen everybody's *face*! I knew Matthias was upset, so I really had to try not to laugh but that was *so* funny!

TAYLOR:

Ruth, however, remembers the episode very differently:

RUTH: I wasn't that young then, but I was fairly young. Way too young for that. The thing is; I felt responsible for the whole thing since I was the one who'd launched the doves. And I was just bawling my eyes out. And all Dad said was:

MATTHIAS: Don't let the world see you crying! The newspapers will have a *field* day if they see that!

Beat.

Shit! What a mess! It's gonna cost a fucking *fortune* to get all those windows cleaned again!

RUTH: I think that whole episode says a lot about the sort of man he is, really.

ACT III

ACT III SCENE 1

The action stops as Taylor talks to the producer.

PRODUCER: Sorry Taylor, / but-

TAYLOR: / Oh! I was really getting / into it there.

PRODUCER: / Haha. Oh, sorry about that. / I could-

TAYLOR: / Yeah, yeah. Don't worry. I'm kidding. I'm / kidding.

PRODUCER: / Oh, OK, OK. I was... um... I was just wondering if you could say the word "quote" for me a few times in different tones. So... just say "'qūote, qúote, qǔote, qùote". Something like that.

TAYLOR: Um... sure. Do you mind if / I ask why?

PRODUCER: / Yeah, yeah. It's just; I'm just a bit worried that it might be a bit unclear at times that you're quoting people, so we might have to edit in the word "quote" before you do. If that makes sense?

Beat.

TAYLOR: Um... I guess. It's just that I don't really want-

PRODUCER: Well, we'll decide later / if we'll-

TAYLOR: / OK. OK. Never mind. Never mind. I'll just do it now and we'll talk about it later.

Beat.

"Qūote, qúote, qǔote, qùote".

A bit of general button pushing.

PRODUCER: OK. That's great. Thanks.

And whenever you're ready, just go ahead.

Beat.

TAYLOR: (*Muttering almost inaudibly*) Quite why you had to break my rhythm just for that, I *don't* know but-

Anyway-

ACT III SCENE 2

TAYLOR:

As it turned out, Pomona was enthused by the idea of building a nation. Ruth, however, was most certainly not.

Throughout the following exchange, Pomona and Ruth talk exclusively to Taylor, never to each other. Taylor criss-crosses, talking to whoever the dialogue indicates she should talk to.

POMONA: The idea of building a nation was actually really exciting. It felt like an achievement to strive towards all of a sudden.

RUTH: I thought that Dad ruling over a country would be a terrible idea.

POMONA: I really like that Matthias also seemed to think the island could be a haven for ecologically-inclined people-

RUTH: Dad was coming out with some bizarre shit. There was actually one meeting where he was harping on about goats!

MATTHIAS: Think about it! They're such amazing creatures! We could use them to cultivate meat and milk right here on the island!

POMONA: I admit the whole goat thing was weird-

RUTH: Goats! Fucking *goats*!

POMONA: -but we did manage to talk him out of it fairly quickly.

RUTH: Apparently, the only reason he didn't go ahead with it is because someone pointed out they'd probably eat up all the grass. And even then, he took some persuading.

TAYLOR: I'm not sure if I'm missing something here but... were you there at those discussions or-

RUTH: No, but *everyone* there heard about it.

TAYLOR: How did you hear about it?

RUTH: Through Mum.

TAYLOR: You talked to Ruth about that?

POMONA: Yeah. As I say, I did think it was a bad idea and I guess I just wanted to vent.

TAYLOR: But, in spite of that, you still thought *Pomona* being a nation was a good idea?

POMONA: *Definitely*. As I say, I liked most of his ideas. He talked about building a hospital-

RUTH: Of course he built a hospital! He *had* to. We were right in the middle of the fucking ocean. Where else would people go if they got hurt?

POMONA: It was a state-of-the-art facility.

RUTH: Who cares?

POMONA: -*and* the *entire* island ran on renewable energy.

RUTH: Alright. I'll give him that one. That was remarkable.

POMONA: I saw him actually making sense for a change.

RUTH: I saw my Dad turn from a madman into a maniac. Did you see what he said about other international leaders?

POMONA: I sympathised with what he said there.

RUTH: He *actually* said:

MATTHIAS: We cannot afford to just stand idly by as the international community threatens us with extinction.

RUTH: *Nobody* had said that.

POMONA: Nobody had said that but nobody *hadn't* said it, and no-one corrected him after he said it.

RUTH: No-one even responded to it. That's how crazy it was.

Beat.

And isn't it a *big* coincidence that the international community's "repression" just *happened* to mean more guards were needed?

Beat.

TAYLOR: Are you suggesting that he used the response of the international community to justify the employment of more guards on the island?

RUTH: *Definitely!*

TAYLOR: Why?

RUTH: Why do you think?

POMONA: I refuse to dignify that suggestion with a response!

TAYLOR: Why?

POMONA: Why do you think?

TAYLOR: *(To Pomona)* So-

(To Ruth) So-

(To Both) Then what happened?

RUTH AND
POMONA: ...

ACT III SCENE 3

TAYLOR:

What Pomona and Ruth separately alleged to have happened next helps to explain why I feel this book is worth writing, in spite of Matthias's personal vulnerability.

Even now, the surrounding events are only just coming to light, so it's fair to say that this will not be a completely comprehensive account of what happened. It could be years before the facts are fully known. However, broadly speaking, we know that Ruth seemed to go through a very sudden and very dark spell.

POMONA: She didn't go outside at all. She just sat there all day, not talking to anyone.

TAYLOR: Did you try to talk to her?

POMONA: Of course.

TAYLOR: And what happened?

POMONA: She'd just say:

RUTH: I'm busy. Leave me alone.

TAYLOR: What happened in those weeks?

Long pause.

RUTH: Um...

TAYLOR: You don't have to discuss it if you don't want / to.

RUTH: / (CRYING) I just felt so alone.

TAYLOR: I understand.

RUTH: No, you don't.

TAYLOR: Did you do *anything* in those few weeks?

RUTH: I read a lot.

TAYLOR: What did you read?

RUTH: A lot of bullshit online articles, that kind of thing.

TAYLOR: Matthias, meanwhile, couldn't have been busier.

POMONA: I barely saw him for about a week. He'd leave at seven in the morning and come back at about midnight so-

TAYLOR: And what did you do?

POMONA: Not much, really.

TAYLOR: Did you feel lonely?

POMONA: A little.

TAYLOR: Did you lose faith in your new nation?

POMONA: No, not at all.

TAYLOR: How come?

POMONA: I'd had to make a lot of sacrifices already but it actually felt worthwhile this time. If anything, I felt happier.

TAYLOR:

Eventually, Matthias came back home.

Enter Matthias.

POMONA: Hi darling.

Pomona kisses him. He stumbles on his feet as if he's about to collapse from exhaustion.

Tea?

Matthias simply nods, seemingly too exhausted to speak. After a beat, Ruth wanders into the room.

RUTH: *(Faintly)* Hi Dad.

Matthias gives an exhausted wave. A long pause.

Dad; can I ask something?

MATTHIAS: Right now?

Beat.

RUTH: Are we ever gonna go home?

MATTHIAS: We discussed this.

RUTH: No, we didn't.

MATTHIAS: Alright, we'll discuss it another time, but-

RUTH: When?

MATTHIAS: I don't know but... another time.

POMONA: Yeah, he'll discuss it another time, darling.

RUTH: When?

MATTHIAS: I said... another time.

RUTH: I want to go home.

MATTHIAS: We are home.

RUTH: Maybe *you* are.

MATTHIAS: No, we both- look, another time.

POMONA: Ruth, this really isn't the time to-

RUTH: It's never the time. You don't give two shits about whether I'm happy / or not, do you?

POMONA: / Oh, don't you give me that, young lady, I'm the one who's been looking after you this whole time while you've / locked yourself away in that room of yours.

RUTH: / Oh yeah, well done for checking on the daughter / you forced to live on some piece of shit island every-

MATTHIAS: /Could you / please-

POMONA: / You were not *forced* / to go anywhere. We-

RUTH: / Oh, don't you make out that I wanted to be here. You didn't want / to be here either until

MATTHIAS: / Could you please / just-

POMONA: / That's not true. / That is so-

RUTH: / You liar! You are *such* a liar!

MATTHIAS: SHUT THE FUCK UP!

Matthias slaps Ruth, knocking her to the floor. A beat. Ruth cries. She looks terrified, stunned at what's just happened.

How dare you? How... *dare*... you?

Beat.

Apologise!

Beat.

RUTH: But-

MATTHIAS: (*His fist clenched and raised*) I SAID-

RUTH: I'm sorry.

Matthias stops himself from hitting Ruth for a second time. Beat.

I'm sorry.

Beat.

MATTHIAS: So you *should* be.

Matthias exits. Ruth continues to sob. Pomona tries to comfort Ruth, a gesture that Ruth rebukes. Pomona exits.

ACT III SCENE 4

TAYLOR: Pomona approached Matthias the next day.

POMONA: What's happening?

Beat.

MATTHIAS: We're steering the island back towards the UK.

POMONA: Why?

Ruth enters.

MATTHIAS: Because I'm sick of having to hear about how much everyone misses it.

Beat

(Turning to talk to Ruth) Happy now?

Ruth doesn't answer. Matthias goes to exit. He stops in his tracks so as to almost apologetically kiss Ruth on the forehead. Pomona looks on. Ruth coldly stares at her mother before exiting.

TAYLOR: How did that make you feel?

POMONA: ...

Beat.

TAYLOR: Then what happened?

POMONA: Things actually started to calm down for a little while. Ruth didn't talk to us much, which was very hard. Matthias didn't really seem to *do* all that much. He went to work, talked with contractors, all that kind of thing. But for the most part, he actually seemed a lot calmer than he had for a long time.

TAYLOR: Did anything big happen?

POMONA: Not that I can remember. I had a lot of personal things but apart from that, there-

TAYLOR: What kind of personal things?

POMONA: Well-

TAYLOR: Sorry, I hope you / don't mind me asking.

POMONA: / No, it's OK. It's OK.

Beat.

I guess I just felt that my daughter didn't love me anymore.

Pomona starts crying. Ruth re-enters. Taylor interviews her separately. As in Act II, Scene 8, Pomona and Ruth do not engage with one another.

TAYLOR: Did you still love her?

RUTH: Of *course* I did. Still do. But I was just so angry with her. Still am.

TAYLOR: Do you feel the same way about your Dad?

RUTH: Well; doesn't matter much / *now*, does it?

TAYLOR: / Did you still love him after he hit you? That's what I / mean.

RUTH: / Um... I think so. I guess I still loved him but I lost most of my respect for him. I gained a little more respect for him when he moved us back towards the UK. I guess that must have been a really hard thing for him to do. But then that all blew up and the way he handled that was just... shocking. And, again, my respect for him just plummeted.

TAYLOR: When did you first get an indication that floating back towards the UK might not be quite as easy as your Dad first thought?

RUTH: I remember he was on a phone call with some British diplomat or something. Can't remember who exactly it was he was talking to. I could just hear him *screaming*.

MATTHIAS: (*From offstage*) Do you think you're fucking Poseidon or something? Neptune, maybe? Who the *fuck* are you?

RUTH: I was terrified.

MATTHIAS: I don't give a *shit* what some fucking convention by a bunch of fucking losers in some fucking loser organisation fucking says. There's no fucking treaty in the fucking world that can make the UK the God of the fucking high seas!

Pause.

Don't give me that *shit*. Don't *give* me that-

Pause.

Oh... FUCK YOU!

From offstage, we hear a phone being slammed down, followed by a whole load of banging and crashing. Matthias eventually storms on-stage. He grabs a bottle of water. Ruth stands frozen to the spot. After an eternally long pause, Ruth finally finds the courage to speak.

RUTH: What happened?

Beat.

MATTHIAS: I'll explain later.

*An eternally long pause as Matthias stands deep in thought. Eventually, he pulls out his mobile phone.
Beat.*

Hi. It's me. Did you hear what the Brits are saying?

Pause.

Yeah. It's OK. I've got an idea.

ACT III SCENE 5

TAYLOR:

The next day, Matthias put out a press release.

MATTHIAS: I was recently told by the UK government *Pomona* was not welcome in British waters. I am equally aware that other nations have made it clear that there will be diplomatic consequences should I continue to head east.

In short, I learned in primary school not to be afraid of bullies. I am thus looking at self-sufficiency as a future option. I am due to do a sit-down interview very soon, where I will give further details.

TAYLOR:

He did so the next day. Matthias had barely sat down before he was asked whether or not he was still resolute not to change course:

MATTHIAS: As I've said before, I won't be bullied.

TAYLOR:

He was then asked what he hoped to achieve:

MATTHIAS: I want to show that self-sufficiency is a viable means to counter the bullying tactics of imperialist nations like the UK. I've realised that too much co-operation often means making too many compromises.

TAYLOR:

Matthias had, in essence, formulated on-the-spot the national ideology that would later come to be known as *memregeco*. According to this ideology, a desire to co-operate with other nations not in tune with your own

country's national values so often leads to undesirable compromises having to be made. Thus memregeco, which means 'self-sufficiency' in Esperanto, is a symbol of national strength.

That moment is, naturally, the reason the interview is remembered at all. However, knowing what we know now, just as notable was when he was asked if he felt he had his family's support.

MATTHIAS: My family has shown me nothing but complete support throughout this whole thing, so I'm not worried about that at all.

TAYLOR:

That statement did have some basis in fact. Pomona was caught on camera nodding along approvingly. As the interview- and with it the live broadcast- was wrapped up, the cameras caught Pomona kissing Matthias approvingly.

For Ruth, however, it was a very different story. Having sworn to herself that she would not watch the interview, she nevertheless found herself doing just that a bit later in the day. I asked her how she felt when she saw him saying that.

RUTH: Furious doesn't even begin to cover it.

TAYLOR: That's when you came up with the idea?

RUTH: Yeah, that's correct, yeah.

TAYLOR: How come?

RUTH: Looking at that statue, I realised how much it meant to Mum and Dad. I knew that if anything happened to it, it'd kind of be a big "fuck you" to the island.

And the idea of the person who'd unveiled it- their own flesh and blood- being the one who smashed it just really excited me.

TAYLOR: Didn't a small part of you think, "I'll be doing something illegal, I'll be doing / something wrong"?

RUTH: / Didn't *even* cross my mind.

Beat.

RUTH: He'd broken the law by slapping me. How else was I meant to get justice?

TAYLOR: Did you plan for it?

RUTH: Not the first time I tried.

TAYLOR: What happened the first time you tried?

RUTH: Well; it all started O.K.

Ruth acts out the story that she starts to narrate.

I managed to sneak out the back door and I managed to grab a hammer from the garage. Now; there was a door to the garage right next to the front door and I did have to open the door really carefully and go in slightly but, fortunately, I managed to find a hammer pretty fast.

So anyway; I'm walking down the road and I see this car and I recognise whose car it is. Now; I know that the couple who owns this car ain't gullible. And I know that if they see me with a hammer in my hand that I'm done for. They're real disciplinarians and they would have made sure that my parents knew what they caught me with.

You know; thinking back on it now, if they caught me with a hammer in my hand, I'd have to admit to what I was trying to do, otherwise they might think I was trying to murder someone or something.

I tell you what; I had actually thought about killing my Dad at one point. I quickly came to my senses but, after he slapped me that time, all options were on the table.

So anyway; I'm continuing to walk down the road, hammer in hand, when I see this other couple that my Dad knows. Now; my Dad knows everyone on the island and they all think he's the fucking bees-knees, so I just quickly hide and wait for them to go.

So anyway; they finally go- or at least, I think they finally go- and on I go. But then suddenly, I just hear "Ruth?" And it's this couple. Not the first couple I mentioned, the second one. The nicer couple.

And at first, I just walk on, hoping that they'll just leave me alone if I pretend like my name ain't Ruth. But then they say it again. "Ruth?"

And I'm like, "Oh shit! Shit! Shit!" and I just freeze. But as they come up close to me, I kind of become aware of the hammer in my hand, so I just shove it down the back of my pants and put my shirt over it.

And when they finally get to me, I really panic but I somehow manage to tell them that I'm just sneaking off to a party, even though there are no parties, or some shit like that. And they tell me to get off home and that they'll tell my parents if I don't, so I eventually kind of back down.

But then they say that they'll drive me home. And I've still got the hammer. So; I tell them, "please drop me around the corner. Please! Please!", making out that I don't want to be caught "sneaking to a party". And I know that I'm fucked if they don't but luckily, they do.

So; I get in their car and I'm having to sit on this hammer that's down my pants, which is massively uncomfortable. But it's only a short journey, so it's not so bad, I guess. Anyway, they drop me off.

And I get out and I'm thinking that they'll leave but then they watch me walk towards my door and I'm thinking, "oh fuck, how the fuck am I gonna get rid of this hammer?"

And I get in the door and my Mum's in the living room, which the front door opens up to. But I get a bit of a break. You see; whenever my Mum's mad, she doesn't turn around. She kind of freezes when she's furious, a bit like I freeze when I'm absolutely shitting it.

And, almost out of instinct, I pretend I'm hammered. As in drunk, you know. And I sort of pretend to slip over. And, when I do that, I kind of open up the garage door as if I'm so pissed that I've fallen on the door handle and I just kind of put the hammer on the table as I "fall" into the garage, hoping that my Mum won't notice.

But then as I'm on the floor pretending to be hammered, I see my Mum staring down at me. Now; I don't smell of alcohol, and I'm thinking that she must have noticed that. And she stares at me for a really, *really* long time.

But then she just walks off without another word, leaving me all alone on the floor. And I just start crying because- well- wouldn't you if your Mum didn't give a shit where you'd been?

TAYLOR: Thinking back on it now, do you think she *did* notice?

RUTH: I have no idea. *None*. As I say, I'm not even sure if she cared, really.

TAYLOR:

I ask Pomona if she did.

POMONA: To be honest, I can't really remember that.

TAYLOR: Do you have *any* memory of it?

Beat.

POMONA: No, not really.

Wish I did but I honestly don't remember that at all.

ACT III SCENE 6

As in Act II, Scene 8, Pomona and Ruth do not engage with one another.

TAYLOR:

Meanwhile, the Irish Sea problem was deteriorating daily.

POMONA

AND RUTH: He wouldn't give in.

TAYLOR: Why?

RUTH: Because he was off his head.

POMONA: Because, as I said before, I think he had a fair grievance.

TAYLOR: Were you involved with helping him in his fight?

POMONA: Not that much, no. Although I did help with one of the YouTube videos he made.

TAYLOR: Is that the one where he said-?

MATTHIAS: We're determined to stand against those who wish to make claims to land just because they're obsessed by size.

POMONA: That's the one. I looked at the script for *that* video, but that's about it.

TAYLOR: Do you think that video went too far?

POMONA: Maybe. I didn't like it when he said:

MATTHIAS: We'll stand up to the imperialist bastards come hell or high water.

POMONA: I think that was just his vain attempt at humour, but even so, I do think he should have cut that.

TAYLOR: Why didn't he change it?

POMONA: He could be very stubborn.

RUTH: I still shudder when I think about that line. It was like his mind was just completely cut off from reality. It was like he'd lived under a rock his whole life.

TAYLOR: Did it start to feel real at that point?

POMONA
AND RUTH: A little.

RUTH: I think it really started to feel real to me when we glimpsed Aberystwyth.

TAYLOR:

Ruth had good grounds to be fearful. A sparse number of troops had been deployed on the UK border so as to give the Pomonans a less-than-warm welcome.

POMONA: How ridiculous was *that*? The British knew full-well that we had no intention of hurting anyone.

RUTH: We had guns pointed at us. *Guns*! What kind of fucking point was he trying to prove?

TAYLOR:

In the end, the seastead came to a stop somewhere between Aberystwyth in Wales to the east and Blackwater in Ireland to the west. Whilst the seastead was doubtless far closer to Aberystwyth than it was to Blackwater, troops from both countries had lined the coastlines, both as a precautionary measure and as a show of strength.

Given that Matthias was placed in the exclusive economical zone of both countries, they both claimed that his docking there was tantamount to trespass. They demanded that he move, but he refused. For now, relations would remain deadlocked.

ACT III SCENE 7

TAYLOR:

In spite of all that was going on, Matthias bizarrely decided that this was the time to let his hair down. Matthias quickly recorded another video and then headed to the beach with his wife. They didn't talk much the whole night, although this wasn't really a cause for concern. As Pomona tells me:

POMONA: We liked leaving each other alone to do our own stuff. It's just the way we were. I always liked that.

TAYLOR:

Whilst sat in the sand holding hands, Matthias asked a question that he'd never asked Pomona before:

MATTHIAS: Do you think we're doing the right thing?

Beat.

POMONA: Not sure. Time will tell, I think.

Beat. Pomona and Matthias look at one another intently. They kiss.

TAYLOR: Then what happened?

Pomona does not reply, responding instead with a knowing look.

Really?

Pomona gives a cheeky grin.

What? Just... right there?

As before.

TAYLOR:

Meanwhile, Ruth had the house to herself for a change, where she discovered that Matthias had uploaded that before-mentioned video.

Ruth surfs around on her laptop for a little while. Her headphones are plugged into her laptop.

RUTH: *(Muttering to herself on seeing a video uploaded by her Dad)* Oh God! He's at it again.

Beat.

(Again, to herself) When was that posted?

Beat.

(As before) Three hours ago. Alright, let's see it.

Beat.

TAYLOR: What was it like for you to watch that video?

RUTH: I was just fucking furious! *I can't believe that he actually said:*

MATTHIAS: I think I speak for my whole family when I say that we're not easily intimidated.

TAYLOR: Why did that make you so mad?

RUTH: Oh, come on? He didn't give a *shit* about me? What kind of fucking right did he have to fucking say that I supported him. I just really wanted to show that I was nothing like him. Then more than ever.

Beat.

MATTHIAS: So... what happened?

RUTH: The next thing I know, I've just stuffed a hammer, a saw and a whole load of other shit in my bag. And I burst out the door.

I see the same couple who stopped me before but this time I just fucking sprint past them. They call my name but I don't give a shit. No-one's stopping me now.

And I get to the statue and I'm just smashing at it, sawing at it, kicking at it, anything I can do to damage it.

And I finally calm down after crying my eyes out and I think to myself, "shit, do you think someone might have seen me?" But then I look around and I see that the entire place is empty.

And next thing I know, I come to my senses and I just run back home and I remember just feeling glad that my parents weren't home yet.

And I just go up to bed and cry myself to sleep, basically.

ACT III SCENE 8

TAYLOR: The next day...

Sounds of banging and crashing off-stage. After a beat, Matthias enters.

MATTHIAS: I'll fucking *kill* / whoever-

POMONA: / Please calm down. It's just / a question of-

MATTHIAS: / It's them! It's *them*! They did this?

POMONA: Who?

MATTHIAS: "Who"? "Who"? The imperialist fucks over there, that's fucking who!

POMONA: But how would they have-

MATTHIAS: Who do you fucking think it was? (*Pointing to Ruth*) Her?

POMONA: Well no, of course I don't think it was *her* but-

RUTH: It *was* me.

Long pause.

MATTHIAS: You did this?

RUTH: Who else would it be?

Another long pause. Without warning, Matthias suddenly lunges at Ruth. He chases her around the stage. Ruth finds the same hammer she smashed the statue with on the kitchen table. Matthias stands on one

side of the table whilst Ruth stands on the other side of it, hammer in hand. Matthias puts his hand down on the table. Matthias suddenly gestures as if he is going to run around the table towards Ruth. Ruth screams out and lunges at Matthias with the hammer, hitting him on the hand he ignominiously placed on the table. He screams out in pain as Pomona shouts:

Fucking stay back! Fucking stay back!

Matthias stands and stares at Ruth as he nurses his injured hand. After what feels like a lifetime, he turns his back, and slowly walks away. He takes a seat. After another eternally long pause, he turns to Pomona and simply says:

MATTHIAS: Phone.

POMONA: What?

MATTHIAS: Phone!

Pomona grabs Matthias's phone, then hands it to him. With his uninjured hand, Matthias dials. Ruth continues to wield the hammer in her hand.

Hi, it's me. Listen; I need you to call an emergency press conference. It needs to be in the next few hours. Got it?

He hangs up. Another eternally long pause elapses before Matthias throws his phone towards Pomona and simply says.

Get me some ice and call a fucking doctor, will you?

ACT III

SCENE 9

A press conference. As in Act III, Scene 3, Matthias stands in front of the statue and Pomona sits to one side of him. Ruth watches on from a far more distant vantage-point.

TAYLOR:

Of course, when Matthias showed up to that same press conference with a bandaged hand, other journalists were naturally curious as to why. Some speculated that he had grown so infuriated about the whole statue situation, that he had actually punched a wall in frustration. Others said that he was simply faking his injury so as to try and garner sympathy. Others went even further, suggesting that he was himself responsible for destroying the statue, and that he had somehow injured his hand in the process, although even the UK government quickly ruled out such a theory.

In any event, Matthias's injury took a backseat in importance to what Matthias actually said at the press conference.

MATTHIAS: Hello all. Thank-you for coming. So; as you can clearly see, the statue that was unveiled to commemorate the opening of the island was vandalized this afternoon. This was a senseless attack on our nation's primary cultural artefact, a source of inspiration to me and to countless others.

Long pause.

As things currently stand, we do not yet have a firm lead as to who the culprit may be. Yet we have our suspicions that it may be linked to the current diplomatic row over the Irish Sea.

Ruth and Pomona show obvious signs of surprise and relief.

To the culprit- whoever that may be- let me say this: *Pomona* is and always will be dedicated to protecting against senseless destruction and terrorism, whatever form that may take.

So; thank-you very much. I won't be answering any further questions at this time. But, if you do have any questions, please direct them to my office. Thank-you.

Questions can be heard being shouted. Above all that, we hear what Matthias says to Pomona:

She leaves tonight.

The look of relief is instantly wiped off of Pomona's face. An unsuspecting Ruth becomes the focus of the scene's end.

ACT IV

ACT IV SCENE 1

PRODUCER Do you want to take a minute?
:

Beat.

TAYLOR: What do you mean?

PRODUCER Do you want to take a minute to just compose yourself a little?
:

TAYLOR: No, no, I'm fine.

PRODUCER: You sure?

TAYLOR: I'm sure.

Beat.

Come on, let's just keep cracking on.

PRODUCER: Although just before we go on, could I just ask you to read a few things?

TAYLOR: Um... can we do that a bit later?

PRODUCER: Um... actually, do you mind if we do that now? I'm just a bit worried that I might forget otherwise.

TAYLOR: Umm... OK. Sure.

PRODUCER: Great. First of all, could I ask you to say "the" in the same way that you said "quote" earlier? You know, say it in the four tones?

TAYLOR: Sure.

Thē, thé, thě, thè.

PRODUCER: That's great. And can you just re-read the paragraph that starts; "Given that Matthias was placed-" Do you see it?

TAYLOR: Yeah, I see it.

"Given that Matthias was placed in the exclusive economic zone of both countries, they both-"

PRODUCER: That's wonderful. Thanks. You don't need to read the rest. It's just that I thought you might have said "economical zone" earlier rather than "economic zone".

General button pushing.

PRODUCER: O.K.

Beat.

Whenever you're ready...

ACT IV SCENE 2

TAYLOR:

Ruth was forced to leave within a week. To the rest of the world, however, it was her decision.

POMONA: We all just wanted to avoid as much press attention as we could.

TAYLOR: Are you saying that Ruth agreed to that?

POMONA: Well; she didn't agree to being kicked off the island, but I'm pretty sure she agreed that this was the best way to go about it. She went along with the whole thing, so-

TAYLOR: Wait. Wait. Wait a minute. Wait a minute. What do you mean when you say you're "pretty sure"? Did you talk about it with her?

POMONA: Not really, no.

TAYLOR: What do you mean "not really"? You either did or you didn't.

Pomona does not respond. Long pause.

So... did you discuss that with her?

Another long pause.

POMONA: Not in a manner of speaking.

TAYLOR: What does that / *mean*?

POMONA: /No. OK? No.

Yet another long pause.

I know it looks bad, but you have to remember that he could be extremely manipulative.

TAYLOR: In what way?

POMONA: I think that you had to know him, really.

Beat.

I guess the best example that I can use is that he was able to make me think of the world in a very different way. Like it was dangerous, like everybody was a threat.

TAYLOR: Did you believe that?

POMONA: Oh, definitely. *Definitely.*

TAYLOR: And have you had *any* contact with Ruth since then?

POMONA: No.

Long pause.

I tried reaching out to her a few times, but she's never responded.

Another long pause.

TAYLOR: You know; I think the question that everyone would want to know the answer to is; why on *earth* did you stay? Why didn't you leave?

Another long pause.

POMONA: I would say that not a day's gone by when I haven't asked myself that exact same question.

Beat.

I'd say I felt trapped. That's all I can really say, to be honest.

Beat.

TAYLOR: And I guess the other question that I *have* to ask is... well... why... why did you-

POMONA: It's OK. You can ask any question you like. Go ahead.

TAYLOR: Well; why did you let him do that? Why didn't you step in? Call someone? Anything?

Long pause.

POMONA: Again, I ask myself that same question almost every day. And, again, all I can say is; what else could I do? Who would I have called? If I needed help with something, Matthias would always be the person I'd call. He made me feel he was the only one who *could* help me with anything.

You know; it's one thing to say what you would have done or what you would do in that situation. But when you're manipulated by someone like that and you've got absolutely nobody to support you, it's pretty difficult to move away from the only person in the world that you feel you've got.

I think that you really have to be in that situation to know what that's like and, unless you have been, I think you can't really understand. In any case, you can judge me all you want for the choice I made but I can't turn the clock back, can I? I mean-

Long pause.

(Stopping herself from crying) No, I won't cry again. I *won't* cry again.

Another long pause.

TAYLOR: *(Clearly wishing to change the subject)* And what about the island, or the nation or whatever? Did you still have faith in it at that point?

POMONA: Kind of. I still thought that the idea of a nation was a good prospect.

TAYLOR: Did you have any doubts at that point?

POMONA: I was about to.

Matthias enters.

TAYLOR: So; what was your relationship with Matthias like at this point?

POMONA: Not great. I seem to remember that Matthias and I didn't speak to each other for a while. I think he just wanted to shut himself off from everything. Maybe he felt a bit guilty, it's hard to say.

TAYLOR: How long was it until you spoke?

POMONA: About three days. It was when the whole issue around our location was really coming to a head. I think he realised he'd have to talk to *someone* sooner or later. He might as well talk to me.

TAYLOR: What did he say?

POMONA: Not much. We were eating and he just suddenly said:

MATTHIAS: Do you think we should leave? Float back towards the Atlantic, I mean.

Long pause.

POMONA: I think you've proved your point.

Long pause.

MATTHIAS: Could you contact the press tomorrow?

POMONA: After that, he just went back to not talking to me for about two days.

Beat.

TAYLOR: And you contacted the press?

POMONA: I contacted the press, yeah.

TAYLOR: And did you give any indication as to what Matthias would say, or / what you-

POMONA: Yeah, I told them exactly what he was going to say, or / what I-

TAYLOR: Really?

POMONA: Yeah, I did. Yeah.

TAYLOR: And did Matthias say anything to warn you about what he did?

POMONA: Nothing.

TAYLOR: So... you had no indication that he was making that video?

POMONA: None.

Beat.

TAYLOR: So... when did you first hear about it?

POMONA: I was fiddling with my phone and it just popped up. I just remember seeing the headline:

“MATTHIAS UPLOADS NEW VIDEO TO YOUTUBE”

TAYLOR: And did you watch it there and then?

POMONA: Oh, absolutely. I don't think I've ever typed something into YouTube so fast.

ACT IV SCENE 3

TAYLOR:

I myself also watched the video at the time.

MATTHIAS: *(Talking to a camera)* So... I can imagine the question that's on all of your tongues is, "why don't you just move?"

And, to tell you the truth, I think that my response to that would have to be very, very simple; "why don't *you* move?" This place is my home. I was brought up in Britain and in some ways, I'm very proud of that. That's why I'm where I am.

And yet, on another level, I resent the British mind-set that they own the seas. Let's face it; there are probably historical reasons for that, but I sort of thought the Brits would be over that by now.

And what's more- and this is the most important thing here- I believe that we all have a responsibility to stand up to bullies.

And the simple fact is that I'm not afraid of bullies.

And I call them the bullies not just because they're using their bigger army to try and scare me- which, again, that won't happen- but because bullies don't have right on their side.

And I think that our values and our dedication to our values- *memregeco* being the key value in my mind- make us the stronger nation on a spiritual level.

And let's face it; we might not be able to stay here. I have to admit that. It would be wrong not to admit it. There; I said it.

And yet we must also bear in mind that- for all the huffing and puffing the Brits might do and believe me when I say they're doing a lot of it behind-the-scenes- it doesn't mean we'll fall down.

And I say *that* because our dedication to self-strength will make us strong in *spite* of that huffing and puffing. Wherever we go, we'll stand on our own two feet as the Brits are forced to rely on others. I don't doubt they'll eventually piss off them off, too, so that'll help, I'm quite sure.

And so; for now, I would say that Pomona is going nowhere. That might not last. It might. Who knows? But they can't go on treating the world like this. So... fuck it. We're staying for now.

ACT IV

SCENE 4

TAYLOR:

I'm not so sure I would have been so desperate to meet Matthias if I had known then what I know now, but I know I was desperate to meet him at that time. I guess there was something about his loneliness as a figure that awoke something within me.

I imagined he wouldn't agree to an interview. Yet, having decided it was worth a go, I decided to try all-the-same. Much to my amazement, he seemed surprisingly eager.

Yet arranging to see him was no easy task. Many British sailors were afraid to transport me to the island for fear of repercussions back home. Eventually, I managed to find a boat willing to transport me, only for the sailor to get cold feet.

I eventually managed to strong-arm a helicopter pilot, who I'd describe as a friend-of-a-friend-of-a-friend-of-mine, to transport me to the island, but not before making over thirty phone calls and not unless I agreed to keep his name strictly anonymous. In the end, he had to make out as if he was flying to Ireland and drop me off on the way.

I wrote at the time that meeting Matthias "was like meeting a man who was in the process of turning his life around. He is unkempt, yet he is equally doing well for himself in his own way and he appears to finally be learning self-discipline. I feel like I'm meeting a man who has not yet rid himself of his own personal demons and who may even inflict those demons on others. Yet, with that said, he has equally managed to assert himself in so cruel a world." Again, had I known then what I feel I know now, I probably would have called him something very different.

In the wake of so difficult a journey to the island being necessitated by my having to find somebody willing to transport me for fear of social exclusion back home, I asked him whether he thought he was liked back in Britain.

MATTHIAS: You don't waste time asking strong questions, do you?

TAYLOR: Well, I'm sorry to ask, but I think / I have to.

MATTHIAS: Yeah, yeah. You're right, you're right. I'm joking, I'm joking.

Beat.

MATTHIAS: I suppose that the answer I would give is that I hope so.

TAYLOR: But do you think that you *are* well-liked?

MATTHIAS: Again, I hope so.

TAYLOR: Do you think the British government likes you?

MATTHIAS: *Fuck* the British government! They're all a bunch of *douchebags*, the *lot* of them. *Fuck* them! *Fuck* them!

TAYLOR: (*Jokingly*) So... that would be a no, then?

MATTHIAS: (*Jokingly*) Yes, I suppose that would have to be a no.

TAYLOR: Do you think that the people *here* like you?

MATTHIAS: ("*Jokingly*") I think they don't have much of a choice.

Long pause. Awkward laughter.

TAYLOR: Where do you see *Pomona* in five years?

MATTHIAS: Hopefully here.

TAYLOR: Do you really think that's likely?

MATTHIAS: I think it's a possibility.

TAYLOR: But do you think it's likely?

MATTHIAS: Um... I'd have to say that depends.

TAYLOR: On what?

MATTHIAS: On the ability of the British government to leave us alone.

TAYLOR: Do you think *that's* likely?

MATTHIAS: Ha! You never know. / Something else- /

TAYLOR: / Do you think that- / Oh sorry, were you going to say something-?

MATTHIAS: Yeah. I was just going to say that you never know, something else might happen.

TAYLOR: Like what?

MATTHIAS: Nuclear bomb, maybe? I'm just saying it *could* happen.

TAYLOR: Would you launch a nuclear bomb if you had one?

MATTHIAS: Maybe if I'd had a few drinks.

TAYLOR: You / were brought up there.

MATTHIAS: / I'm only joking! Come on? Do you really think I'd launch a *nuclear bomb*?

Awkward long pause.

TAYLOR: (*Changing the subject*) Tell me about *memregeco*.

MATTHIAS: Ah. Well; *memregeco* is essentially the idea that you can only really achieve true greatness when you learn to stand on your own two feet. And I think that achieving true *memregeco* is what distinguishes a lasting nation that's found its own identity from a nation that's still trying to forge its own way in the world.

TAYLOR: And so how do you plan to achieve that?

MATTHIAS: That's something that I'm working on.

TAYLOR: I see. And is this something that your family helped you to come up with or-

MATTHIAS: What do you mean?

TAYLOR: Well, I was just wondering if this was your idea or whether-

MATTHIAS: It was my idea. What's my family got to do with it?

TAYLOR: Well, I don't know. I was just wondering if-

MATTHIAS: What? Are you suggesting that they might not approve of my values? Is that it?

TAYLOR: No. Not at all. I was just *wondering* if-

MATTHIAS: Yeah, well; go wonder somewhere else.

Beat.

Fucking *bitch*!

Matthias furiously exits.

ACT IV**SCENE 5****TAYLOR:**

I must admit that I didn't think that much of his reaction at the time. I was naturally shocked and surprised. I wrote about it in the accompanying article and, of course, the tabloids had a field-day. Of the many headlines, the one that stands out for me is:

“WOLFIE WAILS AT JOURNALIST”

In hindsight, it's easy to wonder how I could have been so unquestioning. It's easy to wonder why I didn't ask myself, “if he can be that aggressive with me, is it so inconceivable that he be equally as aggressive towards those he does not?”

I scorn myself daily for not thinking in that way then. As a journalist, I still feel a sense of failure when I reflect on the episode, not least since it honestly never really occurred to me to think too much on the specific question I asked.

That said, I do at least feel able to tell myself that hindsight is a wonderful thing, and that there was no deliberate suppression on my part. Likewise, I was not party to information that I did not pass on, nor did I even have any suspicions that I failed to report. There are those who might argue that I was nevertheless incompetent. Yet, as Pomona told me herself, Matthias often had a hypnotising effect on all who came into contact with him. In that sense, I feel like a victim myself.

In any event, as I suspect was the case with all of the other journalists who followed the Pomona diplomatic crisis with keen interest, I think I was too distracted by Matthias's actions to pay much attention to his character. He had, after all, called the entire British government “douchebags”. He had inferred, only half in jest, that the British would be worthy of being

targeted by a nuclear bomb. He had even joked about creating his own nuclear weapons program.

Given that my article, as you all know, would actually prove to be the final straw so far as the British were concerned, I think my being distracted is that but more justified. As we all know, just three days later, the British issued Matthias with a final ultimatum; move away from the Irish Sea or the government would have no other choice than to evict Matthias by force and even take custody of the island if necessary.

Pomona told me that this was a particularly dark period for her.

POMONA: Words can't even describe how scared I was.

MATTHIAS: Did you consider leaving?

POMONA: No. Although I did actually try to reach out to Ruth at that point.

MATTHIAS: Really? Why then?

POMONA: I really missed her. On some selfish level, I guess I wanted to share the fear I felt with someone else.

TAYLOR: Did you tell Matthias you'd reached out to her?

POMONA: I did, actually.

TAYLOR: How did he take that?

Without warning, the same object that Pomona threw at Matthias in Act II, Scene 2 is this time thrown by Matthias towards Pomona. Long pause.

MATTHIAS: How dare you undermine me!? Fucking *bitch*!

Beat.

POMONA: I'm sorry.

Beat.

Really, I am.

ACT IV SCENE 6

The action stops.

PRODUCER: Sorry, but do you mind if I just check / something?

TAYLOR: / *(Almost under her breath)* Oh, for God's sake. What is it now?

PRODUCER: Just want to check the levels.

There is a really long pause as the producer pushes buttons. This creates an awkward wait.

OK. That works.

More button pushing. He sips from his coffee, slurping loudly. Taylor grows increasingly and more obviously impatient. She finally exclaims:

TAYLOR: Can we get on with it?

Beat.

PRODUCER: Hmm...? Oh yeah, sure. Sorry.

She is just about to start talking when the producer suddenly interrupts her by saying:

Ready when you are.

Now very irritated indeed, she goes on after a beat.

ACT IV SCENE 7

TAYLOR:

Things only got worse from then on...

POMONA: I can't tell you how scared I felt.

TAYLOR: Of what?

POMONA: Of everything, really. Of what Matthias might do, of how the island would survive.

TAYLOR: How did Matthias handle it?

POMONA: As unpredictably as you'd expect. I didn't see him for about three days but do you know what he said when I did?

TAYLOR: What?

MATTHIAS: I'm sorry.

Beat.

Sincerely.

Pomona stands in stunned disbelief.

TAYLOR:

Matthias put out a very legalistic statement that night. Undoubtedly drafted not by Matthias but by a lawyer, it read:

MATTHIAS: As you will all doubtless be aware by now, the government of the United Kingdom recently threatened to forcefully invade the great nation of *Pomona* should I fail to vacate the Irish Sea within 48 hours. Such a threat is dangerously forceful, and shows absolutely no regard for the right of a nation to determine its own destiny and the right of its citizens to move freely.

Nevertheless, I have resolved that it is right to draw a line under this sad and unnecessary diplomatic crisis. As such, I am announcing today that our nation will move from the Irish Sea and sail back towards the Atlantic. I believe this course of action will give our great nation the great fresh start it needs, and help us in our desire to achieve true *memregeco*.

That is all I have to say on the matter for the time-being. Please note that there will be no further comment at this time.

TAYLOR:

The British had been victorious in the war of words over the Irish Sea, and Matthias knew it. The seastead duly sailed off back towards the Atlantic.

ACT IV

SCENE 8

The press conference takes place in front of the now-smashed statue. As was the case with Ruth in Act III, Scene 9, Pomona watches on from a far more distant vantage-point.

TAYLOR:

Perhaps to save what was left of his pride, Matthias called yet another press conference for the next day.

I myself had decided to stay on the island for a little bit longer. I had a hunch that staying would provide me with another story.

I had feared that Matthias would kick me off the island. It was and still is to my surprise that he didn't. To this day, I have never worked out why, although I suspect that he was just too pre-occupied with other issues to even care that I was there.

Given what he'd said in the interview with me and given all that had happened subsequently, I felt as nervous as I'm sure anyone else who was on the island at that time would have felt. Like everyone else who *was* there, I felt that the press conference could be climactic.

As it turns out, another journalist and I had both been reading a Wikipedia article about Robert Budd Dwyer, the politician who killed himself at a press conference on live TV after being caught up in a financial scandal, in the minutes leading up to the press conference.

Another journalist confided to me that she had even gone so far as to arm herself with a kitchen knife, just in case Matthias decided to kill himself and those around him in one final act of glory.

‘CNN’ and ‘RTÉ’, Ireland’s national news network, seemingly had similar fears, taking the decision to broadcast the conference with a three-minute delay just in case there was an incident that might require them to cut the live feed.

The tension was palpable, something that wasn’t helped by his showing up over an hour late. When he did finally arrive, he looked like he’d just awoken from a three-year coma.

I didn’t think much of his speech, which seemed at the time to be little more than a tired, scripted re-tread of the statement that he’d given to the press the previous day:

MATTHIAS: You’re probably asking yourself right now, “why have you called this press conference?”

Well; as I’m sure you’ll all know by now, this diplomatic affair with the British has been trying. And yet, having been dedicated almost from the outset to self-sufficiency or *memregeco* as I like to call it, I have come to realize that this is an ideal time to expand upon that value.

I firmly believe that by learning to be truly self-sufficient, we can achieve true greatness as a nation.

Yet I’ve been asking myself lately; “how can I prove that I’m dedicated to *memregeco* whilst the nation is still what it is?”

And the truth is that I just don’t think I can anymore. And I’m getting pretty sick of trying to justify to myself that I’m holding to it.

You see; I always know that I’m on the wrong moral path or philosophical path when I feel I’m trying to justify my opinions to myself. Only when I sincerely believe what I’m saying to myself do I know that I’m on the right path.

And *memregeco* is where I do sincerely believe what I'm saying to myself and, consequently, my dedication to the value that is *memregeco* hasn't wavered.

I believe that this will mark a great new era for the island, or a *granda freša komenco*, as I like to call it.

And you should know that this will mean sacrifices. Yet they're sacrifices that I think need to be made for the sake of future generations. If they can't say that their earliest ancestors couldn't take care of themselves, then what kind of pride will they have in their identity?

I hope that this makes sense to you. But if it doesn't then, frankly, you can go fuck yourselves.

Thank-you.

TAYLOR:

As I said before, save for the last line, the speech seemed almost anti-climactic at the time, such that I don't really remember it by comparison to what came next.

MATTHIAS: I'll now be taking questions.

TAYLOR:

Routine though Matthias's saying this may seem to some, his saying that shocked me at the time given how he'd reacted to my relatively tame questions only one day earlier. The first journalist to ask him a question asked him where his wife was.

MATTHIAS: Mi ne havas ideon.

TAYLOR:

Confused, the journalist simply asked him the same question again.

MATTHIAS: Mi diris; mi ne scias.

Beat. Nervous laughter and chatter.

Ĉu aliaj demandoj?

Eternally long pause.

TAYLOR:

Eventually, another very brave journalist asked if he still considered Pomona to be a nation.

MATTHIAS: Jes, kaj mi *punkos* iun ajn, kiu diras alie!

TAYLOR:

The next journalist asked him if he hoped for better relations with Britain now that the dispute over the Irish Sea had been resolved.

MATTHIAS: Ne. Ĉiu en Britujo povas miksi miajn tipon tiom al mi.

TAYLOR:

I then took it upon myself to address the elephant in the room:

Could you please tell us what language you're speaking?

MATTHIAS: Esperanto.

TAYLOR:

I already knew that, of course. What I didn't know was:

Why?

MATTHIAS: Kial vi parolas anglan?

TAYLOR:

Not knowing what he'd said, I didn't know what reply to give. I felt at that time like a helpless parent watching their kid running into a busy road. I wanted to help and to stop him from hurting himself, yet another part of me just wanted to scorn him for being so frustratingly reckless.

In any case, I am not sure if he would have known that what he was doing was indeed reckless; after all, he'd scorned me only a day earlier and I was, to some extent, responsible for his actually being in the position he found himself in, yet he didn't even seem to recognise who I was, even if he did seemingly recognise how puzzled I and everyone else felt. Seeing that, he simply said:

MATTHIAS: Ĉu iu ajn havas aliajn demandojn?

Many people shout at questions, but Matthias acts as if he has not heard them.

Ne? Dankon.

Matthias walks out of the room to nervous laughter and a barrage of questions, louder than with the previous press conference.

ACT IV SCENE 9

TAYLOR:

Pomona talked to Matthias that same night...

POMONA: I saw what happened at the press conference...

A long pause as Matthias fails to respond.

Is there anything you want to talk about?

MATTHIAS: Ne. Lasu min so-

POMONA: Don't you *dare* do that with me!

Another long pause. Matthias suddenly starts crying.

MATTHIAS: Please just leave me alone.

ACT IV SCENE 10

TAYLOR: What happened after that?

POMONA: I did what he said. I left him alone.

TAYLOR: And what happened after that?

POMONA: He learned not to love me.

TAYLOR: Sorry, but what was that? I didn't quite catch that.

POMONA: I said; he *learned* not to love me.

TAYLOR: Sorry, again. I don't really understand. What do you mean when you say he "learned" not to love you. I don't really-

POMONA: What else could he do?

TAYLOR: So... how did it happen?

POMONA: In his own typical style. He said he had something for me, at which point he handed me a printout of the speech he gave at the press conference. He'd highlighted particular passages.

TAYLOR: Do you remember what passages they were?

Pomona simply nods. We hear Matthias giving the same speech he gave earlier, but in a more emotional way. At the same time, an emotional Pomona becomes the focus of the scene's end.

MATTHIAS: Yet I've been asking myself lately; "how can I prove that I'm dedicated to *memregeco* whilst the nation is still what it is?"

And the truth is that I just don't think I can anymore. And I'm getting pretty sick of trying to justify to myself that I'm holding to it.

I believe that this will mark a great new era for the island, or a *granda freša komenco*, as I like to call it.

And you should know that this will mean sacrifices. Yet they're sacrifices that I think need to be made for the sake of future generations. If they can't say that their earliest ancestors couldn't take care of themselves, then what kind of pride will they have in their identity?

ACT V

ACT V SCENE 1

The action stops once again.

PRODUCER: Sorry, but something just / doesn't-

TAYLOR: Oh. Will... you... *just*... leave... me... alone!?

PRODUCER: Look, I'm just trying to help, alright?

TAYLOR: Well; you're not helping.

PRODUCER: Do *you* want to do the levels!?

Long pause. Button pushing.

Oh, you know what? Fuck it. Just get on with it, then.

TAYLOR: You're the one who stopped me!

PRODUCER: Just get on with it!

Taylor flicks through some notes. After taking a painfully long time to compose herself, she eventually goes to speak before the producer interrupts her again.

PRODUCER: Are you gonna read the rest of this book or not?

TAYLOR: I was just about to!

PRODUCER: Just get on with it!

Another long pause. Eventually, she starts reading again.

ACT V

SCENE 2

TAYLOR:

The world soon became aware as to what Matthias's future intentions were. The contractors, the chefs and all the other staff who had once been so integral to the island were banished one-by-one.

Yet what really proved to the rest of the world just how far Matthias had regressed and just how far he was willing to go to achieve *memregeco* was a poem entitled *Song to the Sea*. The suspicion is that he would occasionally recite this poem whilst pacing the same stretch of beach where the now-smashed statue was located.

When he sent this poem to the press, it was accompanied by a strongly worded note:

POMONA: "You can all go fuck yourselves if you think I'll ever talk to any fucking scumbag journalists ever again"

TAYLOR:

The poem, when read in the context of that note and *memregeco*, does seem to make some sense. Nevertheless, it rambles so much that it's almost impossible to say for sure what he's going on about. It read as follows:

MATTHIAS: My one, my life,
My world, my all,
Is that insufficient?
Need we always know
Those for whom we work?

Is it not enough
To gaze afar
And to just know of

Those that tried
To learn your deepest secrets?

To know those who knew
Have known not
Those for whom
They ardently worked for
Is poetry, surely?

Yet I'm told otherwise:
I'm told that our secrets
Are, like yours,
Of the same interest,
In spite of our obvious differences.

And I know difference
Because it's a nature I chose
Just like you know it
Because your nature so nobly
Chooses to entertain it.

Yet you are rewarded with adulation
Whilst I am punished with ridicule
In spite of the attached detriment
To those who seek the attached glory
Perversely attached to said discovery.

Be that perversion what it is and
Despite the reckoning of
The cruel nature we sometimes share,
I am willing to be discovered
And discovered in depth.

We risk, we strive, we work and
We dare to discover you.
Be it your reward
Or be it your punishment,
Dare to discover me.

TAYLOR:

I asked Pomona what she thought of this poem.

POMONA: I thought about that poem a *lot* at first, but not anymore.

TAYLOR: Why not?

POMONA: I've got other things to worry about, really.

TAYLOR: Like what?

POMONA: Money worries, for a start.

TAYLOR: How bad is your situation?

POMONA: I declared bankruptcy last month.

Long pause.

TAYLOR: Did you ever try to get any money from Matthias?

POMONA: Oh; come on? He was probably more broke than I was at that point. And even if he did have any money, how would I get it from him?

TAYLOR:

Things seemed bleak for Pomona. That is until, whilst sat just opposite me, she received a Facebook message.

POMONA: It's from Ruth.

ACT V

SCENE 3

TAYLOR:

The message, which Ruth and Pomona were both so kind enough as to let me see, read as follows:

RUTH:

Hi Mum. I know this is weird and shit. And I know that this might come as a bit of a shock to you, but I'm done hating you. I'm still angry as fuck with you, but I wanna talk. I can't believe I'm sending this but, if you wanna meet me, I'm free next Monday.

TAYLOR:

They told me that they hugged and that they talked it all out. That's about all I know and, to tell you the truth, that's all I need to know. They said that they wanted their privacy. I respect that, and I in no way wish to sensationalize or speculate as to what they may or may not have talked about. Yet I am pleased to report that, the next time I met with Pomona and Ruth, I interviewed them both together.

RUTH:

I think Dad's suicide attempt stirred something in me. I started to think about how she must have felt and that just made me think of her as a victim as well. I still think that I was more of a victim but, in the end, I guess I just felt exhausted. I was just done hating her, really. Plus, she admitted to something that had always been a big thing for me.

TAYLOR:

What did you admit to?

POMONA:

Erm... well... you have to bear in mind that I have never lied in my life. But, you know how I told you that I didn't remember Ruth being "drunk"? Actually, I kind of do.

TAYLOR:

Why did you tell me you didn't remember?

POMONA:

Shame, I guess.

TAYLOR:

At first, I sat there stunned. This book is, after all, reliant on the testimonies of these women. If Pomona had lied about that, what else might they have lied about? I excused myself and called Valery.

For the first time, I doubted myself. For a moment, I thought that the book was dead in the water, reliant in part on the testimony of a confessed liar. By this stage, I'd written quite a lot and I saw a section of my life as having been devoted to a project now doomed to failure.

Thankfully, I quickly came to my senses, thus why I do not doubt that these allegations are worth reporting in-depth. Ruth and Pomona had, after all, told me their stories separately of each other. They would either have to have been telling the truth, or they would have to be very duplicitous co-conspirators.

Furthermore, I do not see what they had to gain from it. I was not then and do not ever intend to pay them for their time, so there was no financial gain to be had from their sitting down with me, although I will admit that I can't rule out that they might be able to gain financially by sitting down for other interviews.

Yet even that money would pale in comparison to Matthias's wealth, which they have all-but-completely cut themselves off from with the revelations in this book. What's more, if the allegations are not true, Matthias would always have the remedy of suing them for libel.

The simple fact is that their allegations seemed credible and, even in the remarkable event that they turn out not to be true, they are in any event in the public interest. I see it as a question of duty to publish the allegations in good faith, and I make no apologies for doing so. That was my position when I first started writing the book, and it's my position now.

Having come to my senses, I went and sat with them once more. After re-orientating myself, I asked Ruth:

TAYLOR: So; do you forgive her?

RUTH: It's hard to forget what she did but, yeah, I forgive her.

Pomona cries happy tears and embraces Ruth.

TAYLOR: And do you forgive your Dad?

RUTH: I don't think so. Unless-

TAYLOR: Unless...?

RUTH: Not sure, really. "Unless" is all I can say to that.

TAYLOR: I asked them again how they felt now about Matthias's suicide attempt.

RUTH: I guess I felt sad. He is still my Dad, after all. I guess I felt sorry for him on some level, even after all that happened. But at the same time, I remember thinking that his only legacy would be one of having caused an enormous amount of hurt, so I have to be honest and say that I kind of wished he'd succeeded.

TAYLOR: Do you really mean that?

RUTH: I mean; I know that might seem like a horrible thing to say and, as I said to another journalist, I don't want to encourage anyone to commit suicide, not for a second, not least since I myself have been there before.

I am at least happy that he's having to answer for what he's done. He hasn't escaped scrutiny through death. Then again, he's still causing hurt now. So...it's complex for me, that's all I can say.

TAYLOR: *(To Pomona)* And you?

POMONA: The same, really. I felt a bit empty, to be honest.

TAYLOR: Did you feel in any way sad?

POMONA: I'm not sure, really.

TAYLOR: *(To Ruth)* Do you think about him often?

RUTH: Well, I have to think about him sometimes. I can't just try and forget him. I wish I could, but I know that that's really unhealthy. So... I'd say I think about him when I have to, really.

TAYLOR: And you?

POMONA: Again, the same. I can't really add to that.

ACT V

SCENE 4

TAYLOR:

When Matthias did try and commit suicide, his aides waited an unusually long time before finally taking it upon themselves to go and help him. When they finally did, a note- presumably intended to be a suicide note- was found in his pocket. Scrawled out in red ink, it didn't say much, as was typical of Matthias's personality. It simply said:

MATTHIAS: "There's a whole lot of funky shit online. Just search around for Jack Thompson".

TAYLOR:

The guards were, as one would expect, fired for disobeying Matthias's direct order not to defy *memregeco* as a principle. Yet this is a decision that Matthias may have come to regret, since they subsequently showed no fear or remorse about leaking the contents of that note to the press.

Naturally, this leak sent search engines around the globe into hyper-drive. Official data suggests that there were nearly 5 million searches of the name "Jack Thompson" on Google in the space of just a few days. It seems that everybody wanted to know what he said whilst isolated. Perhaps if they knew what I knew then and know better now, we would not care so much. Or perhaps they would have cared more. I must admit that I cared at that time, although I now care far more about the victims he's left behind.

Eventually, someone did stumble upon the Twitter handle "JackThompsonSOS". Yet there was only one tweet there. It read as follows:

MATTHIAS: I was born with a voice, but I have no intention of hearing anyone else's.

TAYLOR:

At the time that the account was discovered, “Jack Thompson” had just 110 Twitter followers. At the time of writing, that same account (which, naturally, is no longer updated) has over 4 million followers, which was especially bizarre since that same person was unlikely to be putting out any more tweets. Pomona is adamant that Matthias wrote the tweet.

POMONA: I’m convinced it’s him. That’s the exact kind of thing he used to say.

TAYLOR:

Ruth, now a history student, was somewhat more cautious.

RUTH: I think it wouldn’t be wise to say, “It’s definitely him”. I’m pretty sure it is but, for me, not all the evidence is there.

TAYLOR:

Matthias, for his part, has also weighed in on this debate, as well as the litany of accusations made against him. The publishers decided to leak certain portions of the book to the press three weeks before it was published so we could print his response. The response of the press was as swift as it was dramatic:

“MATTHIAS WOLFENDEN ACCUSED OF
ASSAULTING HIS WIFE AND CHILD”

“NEW BOOK TO MAKE SLEUTH OF ABUSE
ALLEGATIONS AGAINST MATTHIAS
WOLFENDEN”

“WOLFIE ALLEGED TO HAVE ABUSED HIS
FORMER PACK”

Perhaps out of desperation, Matthias seems to have reneged on *memregeco* and gone on the attack in a bid to save his reputation. Unthinkable as it seems to me, it seems that he may even have gone so far as to discuss the matter with lawyers given the carefully-worded and legalistic nature of his response. Initially written in Esperanto, the full (translated) statement read in full:

MATTHIAS: My relationship with my wife and daughter grew strained a long time ago. The reasons for this are far more complex than those who were not there can ever know, as is always true in instances of family estrangement.

For my part, I appreciate that the way I have behaved towards those I loved and continue to love has caused a lot of pain, for which I sincerely apologize.

Nevertheless, I strenuously deny that I have ever been physically or mentally abusive towards anyone. I deny any allegations to the contrary in the strongest possible terms, and I am disappointed that my ex-wife and daughter have chosen to besmirch my good name with such slanderous accusations.

I also deny the ludicrous suggestion that I have been moonlighting as a prolific tweeter. I can only hope that people will see this allegation for what it is; a nonsensical suggestion made by individuals enamoured with vengeance and financial gain.

I am outraged to be accused of acting so contrary to the *memregeco* principle to which I am so devoted, and am so disappointed as to have to act contrary to now. I would ask that those who accuse me of reneging on my values will understand why, in this exceptional instance, I cannot simply stand idly by while my reputation is unfairly dragged through the mud.

I am equally angered that journalists in pursuit of a scoop and a government that, for historical reasons known to all, will do anything to bring me down, have both played party to these outrageous allegations.

With that much in mind, I will now channel my energies into becoming a better person, and equally into a fight for truth and justice.

That being said, I am, as I stated before, still committed to the principle of *memregeco*. I would ask for the press to respect my privacy if I thought that so morally corrupt a body would ever respect such a wish. In any event, however, I would ask that those who might will understand why I will not be issuing any further comment at this time.

ACT V

SCENE 5

TAYLOR:

I sat down with Ruth and Pomona one last time. I asked them how they felt about his response.

POMONA: If you know him like we did, you'd know that that's the exact sort of thing he would say.

RUTH: Exactly.

TAYLOR: I guess the question that a lot of people will also ask is, "why now?"

RUTH: All kinds of reasons, is all I have to say to that.

TAYLOR: So; you're not motivated by "greed and vengeance"? That's what Matthias suggested, so I have-

RUTH: Again, he would say that, wouldn't he?

POMONA: He might live on an island, but there's only so little that you can care about what others think.

TAYLOR: And how are you two?

RUTH: We're taking it day-by-day.

TAYLOR: Can you elaborate?

RUTH: Well, I think / that-

POMONA: / Actually, I think we've disclosed enough for now.

Long pause.

TAYLOR: Pomona and Ruth Wolfenden; thank-you very much.

POMONA: Thank/ *you*.

RUTH: / You're welcome.

EPILOGUE

ACT V SCENE 6

The recording studio slowly returns.

PRODUCER: Wonderful.

TAYLOR: Thanks.

Pause.

By the way, about before... I just want to say that I'm really sorry. It's / just-

PRODUCER: Already forgotten, Taylor.

TAYLOR: Thank-you.

Taylor rubs her eyes.

PRODUCER: Relieved?

TAYLOR: Very.

PRODUCER: I still just don't get why...

TAYLOR: Who hasn't wanted to isolate themselves once in a while?

PRODUCER: I guess...

Long pause.

Any plans for tonight?

TAYLOR: I have the house to myself. I think I'll just read a good book. A bit boring, really.

Another long pause.

PRODUCER: Can I just ask one question?

TAYLOR: Sure.

PRODUCER: Do you ever worry about what Matthias might do?

TAYLOR: How do you / mean?

PRODUCER: / Well; he did threaten to sue you, so...

TAYLOR: I guess it's always at the back of my mind. But... I'm not scared. I don't fear him, if that's what you mean. Not any more, at least.

PRODUCER: Why not?

TAYLOR: Even if he won, what would he gain?

The lights slowly fade.